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FCC Mail Room

Federal Communication Commission
445 - 12th Street
Washington, D.C. 20554

SUBJECT: CONCERNS REGARDING UPCOMING FCC DECISION MAKING

I have major concerns regarding three issues that pertain to upcoming FCC decision making:

- Retention of Net Neutrality
- Proposed Comcast - Time Warner merger
- Possible curtailment of land line telephone service

With this letter I am expressing my concern about the three issues named above. The prospect of a few mega corporations gaining more dominance in the lucrative electronic communication and telecommunication industry is appalling and does not bode well for the average consumer.

Various commissions such as the ICC, FTC and FCC were formed, in part, to prevent unfair practices by the powerful and privileged few. It is extremely important that the FCC upholds its role as an impartial regulator and prevent possible anti-competitive practices by overbearing, powerful corporations.

As a consumer I am concerned that the FCC may not remain neutral in their regulatory role. The FCC must not allow itself to be swayed by some legal and technical advisors they have engaged; namely those who were former corporate executives or lobbyist-for firms such as Comcast and Verizon. This country suffered through a robber baron era in its past. We should not be subjected to the possibility of a modern day version.

- Retention of Net Neutrality

Net neutrality is exceedingly important to everyone. The current issue under consideration appears to be another situation where a few large corporations are seeking to control internet access and services by preventing fair competition from multiple smaller, innovative providers. Sadly, in today's society big corporate money has the ability to influence government decision making. History demonstrates that fair competition provides the public with more choices, better service and manageable costs for the consumer than when a few monopolies prevail.

It is incumbent upon the FCC to retain net neutrality as a public good. The FCC should return its regulatory power to that of a utility and return to being a regulator of "telecommunications service" not an "information service". In their upcoming decision making, the FCC role is to remain unbiased and not cater to influential corporations because the average consumer and small competitors have equal rights. The loss of internet neutrality must be prevented.

- Proposed Comcast-Time Warner Merger

The merging of these two companies will undoubtedly result in ever more unreasonable rate increases and fewer choices for consumers. Nationwide many municipalities license only one cable company provider, resulting in a monopoly which is unfortunate for the consumer. Satellite TV has provided

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some respite from cable monopoly, although there has been recent news of a possible consolidation of ATT and Direct TV.

The communication and electronic entertainment industry have become part of modern life, functioning as basic utilities, and they need to be recognized as such. The industry needs continuing diversification, not a consolidation of providers. Consumers benefit from innovation and competition, while mergers only lead to concentration with monopoly control and concomitant pricing. The proposed merger of Comcast and Time Warner must be denied – consumers deserve better. (Attachment A - discusses my experience with Comcast).

- Possible curtailment of land line telephone service

Recently I have learned that the safety net provided by traditional land line service is in jeopardy. Apparently the long term plan of major telecommunication providers, such as AT&T and Verizon, is to curtail land line service in the near future. Maintenance cost is reportedly the key reason.


The reported intent is to provide a wireless customer about 5 hours of back-up phone service during a power outage. Such a plan is absolutely absurd. Every year this country experiences storms that last for days. The negative impact of catastrophic events such as West Coast earthquakes or devastating Midwest and East Coast storms last much longer.

It is a well established fact that during power outages, customers with traditional land line service and corded phones often retain their telephone connectivity. People have been isolated for days, even weeks, without power but because of land line service were able provide status reports to others, including emergency responders.

A telephone safety net is crucial for a population that is aging and also ^{clear} evidence of increasingly severe adverse conditions resulting from climate change. Providing customers only five hours of back-up phone service is pure nonsense and dangerous. Both customers and emergency responders rely on land lines. Catastrophic damage lasts for long periods but the possibility to save lives is crucial during the first 24+ hours. Reliance on cell phone service is not a viable alternative, and the public should not be led to believe it is. The FCC must continue to reject planned curtailment of land line service by telecommunication corporations who are making irrational decisions for the general public.

Conclusion

The general public relies on the FCC to make fair and rational judgments for the public good. Forthcoming regulations must not allow a few powerful corporations to dominate the very lucrative communication industry of the future. There is already far too much corporate greed in this country. Millions of Americans are disgusted and tired of predatory behavior by large corporations.


Mary L. Brugo

Attachment

CC:

Senator Diane Feinstein, One Post Street, Suite 2450, San Francisco, CA 94104
Representative Jared Huffman, 206 G Street, Unit #2, Petaluma, CA 94952

Attachment A
Experience with Comcast Dominance

I have been a Cloverdale (Sonoma County) resident since 2000. For most of the past 14 years Comcast has been the local cable provider. Without fail Comcast rates have risen every year and are consistently higher than the satellite providers. Their basic service is quite limited in scope and thus if one wants more channels there are considerable additional costs. Comcast does not hesitate to increase hefty costs for each additional service they provide. Over a year ago upon installing a new TV with HD capability my monthly Comcast cost increased an additional \$10 per month, whether or not I remember to click for HD reception.

I have continued to retain Comcast cable only because it provides clear reception for KQED radio broadcasting from San Francisco. Cloverdale is about 90 miles north of San Francisco and even with a midpoint booster tower the surrounding hills can interfere with radio transmission.

KQED FM reception was clear and available free (as FM reception is) in our local rural areas until Comcast acquired some access to that band-width several years ago. Since then the free KQED reception quality deteriorated substantially. I have a quality FM radio receiver and to improve free public reception I have tried various antennas to no avail. Some satellite radio programs, including select NPR programs, are available with TV satellite service but only Comcast carries KQED locally.

Wherever I've lived I have been an NPR listener and supporter of local NPR affiliate radio stations for about 30 years. Locally I support KQED, San Francisco and KRCB, Santa Rosa/Rohnert Park. It is exceedingly unfortunate and costly that I must retain Comcast to receive clear radio transmission from KQED.

Numerous rural NPR listeners in this area lost a major radio resource when Comcast acquired the band-width that carries KQED locally. From my experience Comcast is a corporation that overcharges for its services, and their proposed merger with Time Warner should be denied.